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THE

RELATIONS OF RELIGION

TO WHAT ARE CALLED

“DISEASES OF THE MIND.”

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I envy no qualities of the mind or intellect in others, nor genius, nor power, wit or fancy: but if I could choose what would be most delightful, and, I believe, most useful to me, I should prefer a *firm religious belief to every other blessing*: for it makes life a discipline of goodness; creates new hopes when all earthly hopes vanish; and throws over the decay, the destruction of existence, the most gorgeous of all lights; awakens life in death, and calls out from corruption and decay, beauty and everlasting glory.—*Sir H. Davy.*

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# THE RELATIONS OF RELIGION

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## DISEASES OF THE MIND.\*

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No one can contemplate the present provision for the comfort and cure of the insane without gratitude to God, nor without admiration of the philanthropy and science which have, together, achieved such amazing results. It seems but yesterday, when, to lose one's reason, was to lose all claim to sympathy, or even pity, from nearest and dearest friends. The sufferer was regarded and treated as a fiend. The first decided symptom of insanity was the signal for loading him with chains and fetters; and for building a pen, or digging a cave, for the hopeless exile's abode. The stoutest heart melts at the scenes of refined cruelty which an investigation of prisons, poor-houses and private families has brought to view, even within fifteen or twenty years; and, to those who have been familiar with such exhibitions, a modern insane hospital, like those at West Philadelphia, (Pa.), Trenton, (N J.), Hartford, (Conn.), or Worcester or Somerville, (Mass.), must seem to be among the richest of heaven's blessings to a suffering world.

The patient observation of the phenomena of insanity for a series of years, and in multiplied varieties of subjects and circumstances; a close investigation of the causes, proximate and remote, from which it is supposed to have proceeded, and the results of the several modes of physical and moral treatment, constitute the elements of a distinct science; and it is important that the principles which are adopted as its basis should be

\* The substance of these remarks originally appeared in the "Biblical Repository and Princeton Review" for January, 1850.

well considered. To subserve this purpose, we venture a few observations upon the relations of religion to what are called "diseases of the mind."

The attention of the writer of the present remarks has been particularly directed to this subject by an elaborate and somewhat ingenious article which met his eye in a foreign periodical of great respectability.\* In a cursory examination of the article upon its first appearance, he was disposed to question some of its positions, but, in the hope that it would be better and more quickly done elsewhere, the purpose was dismissed, and casually revived by the occurrence of some cases analogous to those cited in support or illustration of the author's views. A more particular examination reveals a vein of error running through the body of the argument, and tinging all the principles and inferences which it sets forth.

The article to which we refer bears the popular title of "*Religious Insanity*." This phrase, of itself, conveys a false notion, though it is very naturally adopted from the title of the work reviewed.† We hope it will be dropped from the tables of supposed causes of insanity in our public documents.

The reviewer sets out in his examination of Dr. Ideler's book with the singular assumption, that "the object and aim of revealed religion is to modify the earthly and false principles which natural religion includes and promulgates; and the whole of what is termed religious education ought to be conducted," he says, "with the view of bending the deductions of the untutored mind to the truths of revelation, and by a diligent circulation of sound doctrines, eradicate the false." The passage is almost obscure enough to pass for a scintillation of transcendentalism. So far as we can comprehend it, we think it places natural and revealed religion in an attitude towards each other which their relation by no means warrants.

If we understand "the object and aim of revealed religion,"

\* Winslow's Journal of Psychological Medicine and Mental Pathology. April, 1848. London.

† "Religious Insanity, illustrated by histories of cases; a contribution to the history of the religious errors of the age. By Dr. K. W. Ideler, Professor of Medicine and Clinical Psychiatry at the University of Berlin," &c.



it is to make known to men the true character of God—the infinity and harmony of his moral attributes—the holiness and spirituality of his law, and the condition and prospects of the human family as transgressors of it—the interposition of Christ as an atoning sacrifice—the offer of a gratuitous and perfect salvation to all who believe in him—the nature, evidences and fruits of this faith, and the covenant of eternal love which Jehovah makes with those who embrace it. It certainly cannot be regarded as in any sense a “modifying” system. It is rather revolutionizing. It introduces man into a new existence, with new relations, interests and duties. The offer of pardon to a convict in his cell could scarcely be called a “modification” of his imprisonment, or of his sentence, or of the law by order of which he suffers. The return of the prodigal to his father’s house could hardly be called a “modification” of his exile.

The “object and aim of revealed religion” is represented by its divine author to be no less than a complete and radical change of the human heart. When it is communicated to man in his natural state, and with all the helps to a knowledge of God which natural religion can supply, its appropriate effect is so completely transforming as to be but feebly illustrated by the restoration of sight to one born blind, or the return of the dead to life. Instead of “modifying the earthly and false principles which natural religion includes and promulgates,” it utterly repudiates and unequivocally condemns them. The knowledge of God, which has been derived from nature only, has always and every where degenerated into sottish idolatry. When the better portion of natural religionists have learned something of the Supreme power, from the plain tokens of it which are stamped on every production of his omnipotent hand, they have not glorified him as God, nor has it been heard or known that any such revelation of his existence or attributes, as “natural religion includes or promulgates,” has ever lead a guilty man to abhor himself and repent in dust and ashes, or even to inquire what he should do to be saved. Is it not a shame to represent a poor, meagre, unhelpful thing like this, as the basis or substratum on which the faith and hope of Christianity must rest; or as that which revealed religion merely *modifies*? Or to represent the religious educator as a nursery man, who finds

all his grounds filled with desirable fruit-trees, requiring only to be bent this way or that to secure their maturity and fruitfulness, when, in truth, he is called to cultivate a field overrun with thorns and briers of rank growth—nigh unto cursing—whose end is to be burned—and which can be reclaimed only by instant and diligent toil and the peculiar and sovereign interposition of omnipotence?

This false position, in which the reviewer places revealed religion, naturally betrays him into false views of its offices. He takes the history of an ungodly world resisting the influences of Christianity, for the history of Christianity itself striving to reconcile the world to God; and this, of course, leads him, in the sequel of his article, to mistake the confusion and derangement which some minds suffer when they contemplate the pure doctrines of religion through an obscure and distorting medium of their own, for the influence of the doctrines themselves. "If we were to look only on the dark side of the picture which the history of *Christianity* presents," he says, "we might be easily tempted to pronounce *it* a curse rather than a blessing, and despair of human happiness." But he totally misconceives the object of vision. It is not the history of JOHN HOWARD that presents a revolting exhibition of crime and squalid misery. That is all bright and glowing with warm sympathies and earnest philanthropy. It is the loathsome abodes of degradation and suffering into which he groped his way, and the wretched convicts, whom he describes as dragging out a burdensome existence within those dark and dripping walls, from which we shrink with such instinctive horror.

"The object and aim of revealed religion" is to present to the mind objects of contemplation appropriate to its highest capacities and widest desires; and to excite in the spiritual nature of man hopes and aspirations of which, without such a divine revelation, it is always and everywhere ignorant and incapable. But he is naturally opposed to the contemplation of such objects. He has "a carnal mind, which is enmity against God." So corrupted and perverted is his nature, and so evil are his deeds, that he loves darkness rather than light, and prefers the bondage of Satan to the liberty of a child of God! When, as a self-convicted traitor, he is summoned to return to

his allegiance, upon the promise of a pardon, purchased at an infinite price, and to submit thereafter to a wise and holy government—he derides and contemns the summons and persists in his rebellion. It is, indeed, an unnatural and offensive exhibition of guilt and madness; but it is his own memoir, and not the history of the Sovereign, nor of his government, that is rendered infamous by it.

“Fanaticism, folly, knavery, insanity are traceable in the professors of every form of religious belief—very traceable in the false creeds, but too lamentably manifest in the true. The history of the church of Christ—the great teacher and promulgator of his doctrines, and the means by which many successive generations of mankind have been taught religious truths—displays an immeasurable delineation of the most dangerous errors as the necessary results of a degenerate piety and an ignorant devotion. Mad bigotry and fanaticism may be seen hand-in-hand, and darkening the fair doctrines and morals of Christian truth. The most frightfully destructive wars, the inconceivable cruelties, caused and practised by inexorable power, the deepest sagacity and the maddest insanity, have been the means used on too many occasions to root out heresy, to promulgate dogmas, or to defend a degenerate and an erroneous faith.”

This picture is dismal enough, one would think. But our reviewer is, not unnaturally, betrayed into another error more plausible, and, therefore, more dangerous. He evidently regards the heretic as a religious madman, to be cured, like other madmen, by a purgative. “To the psychologist,” he says, “*this dismal view of our holy religion* (mark the expression) becomes the more dismal when he finds, in scrutinizing the details of history, that often the heretic was only a religious madman, and that purgation by hellebore would have been the remedy for his heterodoxy rather than purification by fire. Knowing the all-engrossing nature of religion, and the intensity of the emotions and feelings that it excites, he is prepared, *a priori*, to expect every form of insane aberration from religious truth, and every form of mysticism and fanaticism. How often religious excitement is mere animal excitement! How often religious insanity is excited by religion, and how often by functional or structural diseases of the cerebrum, are important questions to

solve, inasmuch as the solution involves not only the discrimination of what is religious truth, but also the determination of the ætiology and treatment of insanity in matters of religious belief and conduct."

We readily admit the absurdity and sin of attempting to "remedy heterodoxy" by fire, and we do not doubt that the vagaries of many religious errorists have originated in some disorder of the physical system, which medical skill might have controlled. But the heresies which have been so general as to excite persecution by fire, or so disastrous in their nature and results, as to impart to the history of our holy religion a "more dismal" complexion than all the wars and cruelties which bigotry and fanaticism have engendered, must be something more than, here and there, a case.

And yet, how can we conceive of a whole community, embracing all ages, associations, habits, and temperaments, to be seized at the same time with the same form of heresy, so as to constitute a general and simultaneous paroxysm of "religious insanity!" If, for example, the denial of the divinity of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ must be regarded as a heresy, we can scarcely suppose our author to mean that it could be cured by a "dose of hellebore." The great apostle to the Gentiles was not a "religious madman," when he sought authority from the high priest and set out upon his bloody mission to seize, bind, and persecute to death any disciples of the Lord whom he could ferret out at Damascus. The wonderful scene which occurred upon the journey was not fitted to restore a maniac to reason, though it was marvellously efficacious in transforming a blasphemer into a believer, and a persecutor into an apostle. The madness was in his heart. The disease was in his moral nature, and not in the structure or functions of the cerebrum. He was filled with enmity to the humbling doctrines of the cross. A learned Pharisee and a disciple of the great Gamaliel could not endure the thought of submitting, like a little child, to the teachings of a crucified Nazarene. To accept salvation as a free gift of grace, through faith in the merits of another, was perfectly intolerable to his proud heart. He voluntarily yielded himself to the dominion of malignant passions, and waged a war of extermination against the new religion, and against all

who were otherwise minded than himself towards its claims. It is substantially so with every errorist, and every persecutor. They refuse to come to Christ that they may have life. They have not his spirit; and their heresy, whatever form it may assume, is the issue of a corrupt heart, not the vagary of a weak or deranged brain.

Neither is it "the engrossing nature of religion, nor the intensity of the emotions and feelings which it excites, that prepares the psychologist to expect, *a priori*, every form of insane aberration from religious truth, and every form of mysticism and fanaticism." The assumed cause is neither adequate nor appropriate to the production of such a result—at least not with so much uniformity as to warrant an *a priori* expectation of its occurrence. The true cause is the introduction of a pure principle into a corrupt nature. It is the conflict of light with darkness. It is the struggle of the strong man armed, and in his palace, with the stronger than he who comes to dispossess him. It is the war which the law in the members carries on with the law of the mind.

If the religion of the gospel did indeed absorb the whole man, and bring all "his intensest emotions and feelings" into captivity to Christ, peace would flow in upon the soul like a river, and all its purposes and desires would be and remain in perfect accordance with the divine will. In a word, such an one would be a truly rational man. But through some pre-existing moral defect or derangement in himself, religion has but an imperfect dominion over him, and hence the "insane aberrations from religious truth—the heresies and the persecutions and the endless forms of mysticism and fanaticism."

Passing over the many instances of such erratic and fanatical extravagances which history records, and to some of which the review before us alludes, we will glance at two recent and notable ones, occurring among ourselves, that we may the better judge whether religion makes men insane, or whether it merely fails, in many cases, to bring them to their right mind; so that it may be said that they continue insane in spite of all that religion can do for them.

A clergyman, in infirm health, sought to amuse his listless hours by framing a puerile romance, after the manner of eastern



fabulists, with names, dates and localities, bearing no relation to sober history. These writings, in some way, without the author's privity, came into the hands of strangers. In 1826, one Joseph Smith professed to have found, in the town of Palmyra, N. Y., some brass plates enclosed in a box, such as is used for packing window-glass. Of these plates he pretended to be the interpreter. With a stone in his hat, and his hat over his eyes, he dictated what a man, named Harris, wrote. In consequence of some dispute, Harris departed before the interpretation was ended, and one Cowdrey took his place and completed the "Book of Mormon." Smith then avowed himself a prophet, and the founder of a new dispensation, and gathered many disciples, who accompanied him to the state of Missouri, where they established a city and built a temple. We need not pursue their adventures.

The contents of the Book of Mormon, or the Mormon Bible, were neither more nor less than the self-same tales of romance which the invalid clergyman amused himself with writing. A large number of persons, however, embraced the delusion; many abandoned a profitable business; some sacrificed large property, and not a few were ruined in soul, body and estate, by putting their trust in this bare-faced imposture.

It is perfectly obvious, we think, that a mind well informed and established in the received doctrines of the Christian faith, and endued with but very ordinary discernment, would be proof against so bold an imposture. If any intelligent and respectable persons joined the Mormon ranks, that, of itself, shows either a predisposition to insanity, which this fanciful revelation was fitted to develop, but with which religion has no connection whatever; or that there is a deficiency of discernment, or a neglect or abuse of the reasoning powers, or a morbid love of distinction and notoriety, to gratify which they are willing to sacrifice all other interests. If a judicious, faithful parent or Sunday-school teacher had given direction to their inquiries and furnished their minds with just and systematic, though exceedingly simple, views of the doctrines of revelation, they would have had balances wherewith to weigh the pretensions of the new prophet, and by means of these their vanity and falsehood would have been made manifest.

At a somewhat later period, a man named Miller, (a Baptist minister, as it is said,) professed to have had a revelation of the precise day on which the second advent of Christ would occur, and when his people would be called to rise and meet him in the air! He and his deluded apostles, or agents, went from town to town and from house to house, "leading captive silly women," and imposing upon the credulity of the ignorant. So settled was the conviction of many minds of the truth of his predictions, that they arranged their worldly affairs in reference to it, as an ascertained event, and made no contracts extending beyond the designated day. Prosperous citizens sold their estates, and declined the ordinary avocations of life, that they might give themselves wholly to the business of preparation; and, as the eventful period drew nigh, many evinced the sincerity of their convictions by providing what they regarded as suitable apparel for an aerial flight; and some actually assembled in groups upon summits which might be supposed most favorable to an early and easy ascension! The dupes of the false prophet were counted by thousands. Scores were committed to insane asylums who were crazed with excitement, or with disappointment; and many within and without the charmed circle were doubtless left to believe that all revelations are as idle and delusive as Millerism.

We need not say how the plainest scriptures must have been wrested from their true intent and meaning, nor how deaf an ear must have been turned to the voice of reason and common sense, before the mind could have surrendered itself to such a fancy. There is not a trace of insanity, however, in any stage of the process. It is a simple, voluntary subjection of reason to the influence of imagination or superstition, instead of a child-like submission of all the powers and faculties of body and mind to the revealed will of God. And, although we may admit that such delusions have, in many instances, been the ostensible cause of insanity, as our hospital returns allege,—“revealed religion” is no more responsible for them than for paroxysms of *mania-a-potu*. It is because the plain truths of revealed religion were misapprehended, perverted or rejected, that the imposture succeeded, and the mind was led captive by Satan at his will. It is not strange that a vessel left to itself, on a stormy

sea should, sooner or later, go to the bottom, or fall into the hands of wreckers.

Dr. Ideler's book, as we learn from the review, consists of twenty-six pages of introduction, followed by a history of nineteen cases of what he calls *religious insanity*. His theory is represented by the reviewer as "too transcendental and impracticable to suit the English mind; but in connection with this theory," he says, "and indeed, as a principal object, he develops his ideas as to the nature of these observations of the human mind, *in matters of religion*, which, becoming manifest from time to time, in great numbers of people, give them the characteristics of an epidemical disease, closely analogous to insanity, if not identical with it."

We confess our inability to understand the meaning of this passage if the printer has been "true to copy." What are the "observations of the human mind," and how are they manifested in large numbers at a time? We can solve the difficulty only by supposing that "observations" is a misprint for "aberrations;" and then the theory is that aberrations on the subject of religion became manifest, at times, in large numbers of people simultaneously, imparting to them the characteristics of an epidemic closely resembling insanity, if it be not insanity itself.

As a matter of theory, we can conceive of scarcely any thing more fanciful. It involves the idea that these aberrations spring from a common cause, operating at or near the same time, with substantially the same effect, upon various minds. That this idea was present to the Doctor's mind is manifest from the cases he cites in illustration. He seems to overlook the fact, that no two cases of insanity ever occur resembling each other, as any thousand cases of cholera, or small-pox, or yellow fever, or other epidemic resemble any other thousand. If we take the Shakers or Jumpers for an example (being one of Dr. Ideler's cases,) we find, at first, one person holding some radical doctrine which distinguishes their community. He is, peradventure, a blasphemer or an infidel, but having observation or shrewdness enough to select a form of imposture which fits the times or the class on which he proposes to operate, he presents himself as a prophet or a revealer of visions. He pretends to have had communion with the invisible world, or to have been



commissioned in some supernatural way to proclaim a new system of faith. He is not an insane man in any sense, except that in which all wicked men are insane. He has formed a deliberate purpose of imposing upon the weak and ignorant, to whom he may have access; and though oftentimes this devilish intent is never fully disclosed, it not unfrequently shows itself, sooner or later, in the most revolting forms of brutal licentiousness. The impostor enters upon his baleful mission, taking, if he sees fit, seven other spirits more wicked than himself for his accomplices, or relying on his first converts for such services. At all events, he must make his separate and distinct approach to each human mind that he deludes, and that mind must be so unprepared, through ignorance or perverseness, to judge between truth and error, as to embrace the delusion, not from any such necessity as that which subjects the body to a prevailing fever or influenza, but from a necessity of which they are themselves the authors and disposers. One after another falls into the snare. The delusion is self-propagating, and, in a few months, the arch-deceiver is able to count his ministers by scores and his disciples by thousands. And is not this one of the cases where great numbers of people manifest aberrations of mind, to which Dr. Ideler attributes "the characteristics of an epidemic disease, closely analogous to insanity, if not identical with it?"

A tailor of Leyden went to live at Munster, and privately taught what was called "the doctrine of re-baptization," and won many converts among the lower orders. When an attempt was made to confute him and his co-religionists, several went running about the streets crying, "Repent and be re-baptized, every one of you, lest the wrath of God overwhelm you." After a while they began to introduce practices and teach doctrines very like those of the Mormonites of the present day. Prophets and prophetesses soon appeared, and supernatural revelations were plentiful. John of Leyden, the afore-said tailor, betaking himself to sleep, continued in a dream for three days together. Being awakened, "he speaks not a word, but calls for paper. On it he writes the names of twelve men, who were to be chief officers over this new Israel, and to govern all things; for such," he said, "was the will of the heavenly Father, when he had thus prepared the way to his king-

dom." He propounded, as a revelation from heaven, that no man was bound to one wife only, but that every man might have as many as he pleased. John himself took three; and those were considered to be the most pious and praiseworthy who had the greatest number. One of John's queens (for he was very naturally made king) thinking that it was not pleasing to God that men should die of famine, as they did during the siege of Munster,\* ventured to express her opinion, for which offence John led her into the market-place, and, commanding her to kneel down, struck off her head!

This case is cited by Dr. Ideler as an instance of *religious insanity*. If it is fairly made out, then what all men would regard as duplicity, fraud, falsehood, licentiousness, and murder, under ordinary circumstances, become only various developments of disease, for which the sufferers or actors are no more responsible than they would be for an ulcer. John of Leyden, for aught that appears, was a lazy, idle, worthless fellow. He may have left Leyden and come to Munster for the very purpose of finding an order of persons weak and low enough to be duped by his shallow arts. He draws around him a few kindred spirits, whom he persuades to abandon their lawful calling to become brawling propagators of his folly. Emboldened by a rapid increase of adherents, the fanatics, (if we may not better say, fiends,) proceed from one degree and phase of iniquity to another. The judgment of God upon their daring impiety does not linger. They are soon given up to a strong delusion, that they should believe a lie, till at last pretended revelations are announced giving license to brutal lust, and ending in deeds of blood. How can we persuade ourselves, that the authors, abettors and partakers of such a delusion are not to be regarded as voluntary transgressors of the laws of God and man, and responsible for all the consequences? Why should the attempt be made to cloak their iniquity by a suggestion of "epidemic insanity?" The dumb trance, with all its circumstances, was obviously a clumsy and impious imitation of the birth of John the Baptist, and the number selected as his

\* On the lofty steeple of the church of St. Lambert, in Munster, are still suspended three iron baskets or cages, which contained the remains of John and his two chief accomplices, who, after obstinately defending the city against the bishop, were made prisoners and tortured to death with red hot pincers.

chief coadjutors, was doubtless intended to suggest some resemblance between his spurious office and mission and those of the divine author of our faith. There is too much method in such madness to justify us in holding the subject of it guiltless, and we earnestly deprecate any attempt to confound so clear a case of imposture with involuntary "aberrations of mind."

The first which the reviewer selects from Dr. Ideler's nineteen cases of religious insanity is substantially as follows. The patient was the son of a carpenter, and was born in 1813. He was affected with scrofula from his infancy, and up to the age of sixteen had chronic ophthalmia. His father was a drunkard, had frequent fights with his wife and abused his children. It was a quarrelsome family. The paroxysms of anger in the mother brought on epilepsy, which first deprived her of reason, and, after sixteen years, of life. One would think, that an infancy and childhood, passed amidst such scenes as these, would account for almost any eccentricity and perverseness in after life. But the reviewer, in enumerating what he regards as predisposing causes of insanity in this case, mentions "an hereditary tendency derived from both parents. The long-continued series of epileptic attacks to which the mother was subject previously to her death, and which in effect proved ultimately fatal, on the one side, and the habitual desire for alcoholic stimulants on the other, show this predisposition sufficiently; for all experienced persons know that habitual intoxication is, in many cases, only another form of insanity." We presume there may be authority for regarding such a disease of the mother, though developed at an advanced period of life and attributable to a known and specific cause, as predisposing to insanity in her offspring. And though inordinate alcoholic stimulation may, in rare instances, be the effect as well as the cause of cerebral disease affecting the mind, we question the author's doctrine, that habitual intoxication is, in any case, to be regarded as "a form of insanity," in the popular use of the term. It is not yet regarded as a valid defence to a criminal charge that the accused was "habitually intoxicated," though it may be that we are making rapid progress towards such a point.

But to return to the patient. The disease of his eyes prevented him from attending school, so that he scarcely acquired the ru-

diments of secular knowledge; and hence, he had not "that training of the mental faculties and that development of the intellectual powers which would have modified, if not overruled, the predominant instincts." Is this a professional phrase? "The predominant instincts" of a human being! What are they beyond those of his animal nature? For want of such training and development, says the reviewer, "the religious element of the man's character took the lowest form of religious manifestation, and the Deity was regarded as an avenging being, to be propitiated by prayers and intercessions, and a scrupulous attention to ceremonials. It was a modification of demon-worship." Surely this is a new doctrine—that a training in secular knowledge would have prevented the patient from regarding the Deity in such a light! Have not some of the most learned of Pagan Philosophers adopted such a view of his character? And among the learned and intelligent of Christian communities, do we never find those who seek to propitiate the divine favor by prayers, and intercessions, and a scrupulous attention to ceremonials? They would feel themselves sorely aggrieved if such an inference should be drawn with respect to them, or if they were regarded as using a "modified form of demon-worship."

But besides the disease of his eyes the patient had frequent turns of weakness and giddiness, and, from the age of sixteen to twenty-five, a daily hemorrhage from the nose. At twenty-two he suffered from a determination of blood to the head and chest, violent palpitations, intense head-aches and flashings before the eyes. From seven years of age, through life, he had spectral illusions, changing their character as he advanced in years. "He considered them as but phantoms of the imagination, and it was only with increasing *religious* terrors that he began to think them visions of the devil."

Among other eccentricities of conduct it is mentioned that "having persuaded his brother to receive the sacrament, he insisted upon washing his feet in imitation of Christ who washed the feet of his disciples." On another occasion his sister presented him with a small sum of money for some purpose, and accompanied it, as he conceived, "with a peculiar grimace. At the same moment he observed an old broom placed against the wall, which if met in the morning, according to an old su-

perstition, indicates bad luck, and might even call up the devil himself. The thought came like a flash of lightning, that his sister was the devil, and that he had taken her form to give him the money and thereby bind him to his service. Just at this time a piece of glass wounded his foot through his boot, and this he considered to have happened through the agency of the devil, who was continually meeting him. He now took to continued prayer or perusal of the Bible for assistance and consolation. A passage in the tenth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles in which Peter addressed Cornelius to the effect that his prayer was heard, suddenly excited the idea that God might be induced to hear his supplications if he should fast as this centurion did, and so he fasted from Sunday till the Monday-week following! During this time he felt no hunger. He occupied his time with a continual perusal of the Bible, and was constantly haunted with spectres having almost exclusive reference to the devil. After reading Christ's announcement of the destruction of Jerusalem, he was convinced that the world was coming to an end, and that Berlin would be destroyed by fire. Under this impression he set forth with a piece of wood as an amulet, to bless the houses of his friends and thereby preserve them from the impending destruction. He walked before the house fixed upon for this purpose murmuring—In the name of God the Father, &c. He went about blessing public buildings and institutions, as well as private houses. The day after this he was admitted to the hospital, fed with a tube, &c. He remained but a short time, though he was soon after re-committed, and was under treatment eight months, when he was restored to his friends in tolerable health of body and mind."

These are the predominant features of the case, and what there is in them to give it the character of "religious insanity," the reader will judge. We cannot divine.

We are informed, in the course of the narration, that "the religious teaching made a deep impression on his mind; so that he viewed the mimicry and mockery of the minister by other boys with lively displeasure; and often prayed earnestly to God to deliver his mother from her afflicting malady." What this "religious teaching" was, or from whom, or at what period of life received, we are not informed. Both the health of the



mother, and the habits of the father, would seem to forbid, even the usual parental care, and there is an intimation in the narrative, that after the mother's death, there was a lamentable alienation among the members of the father's household. Certainly such a house is far enough from being propitious to a healthful, religious inculcation or development. We should not be surprised to know that some superstitious, shrivelled, petulant old school-dame had filled his excitable brain with stories of fairies and hobgoblins before he was out of petticoats. For though he seems to have gathered some fragments of scripture history—such as a child's memory easily retains—the statement does not furnish ground to believe that he ever had a single just or abiding impression of any religious doctrine or precept whatever, during his whole life. On the contrary, it furnishes the clearest evidence that those delusions which are used to connect the case with religious subjects are really the result of a constitutional disease of the brain; and though taking their hue from the superstitious notions which he had conceived or imbibed, had really no more connection with “revealed religion,” than his belief that Berlin would be destroyed by fire had with the philosophy of combustion.

In this discussion we assume that Dr. Ideler and his reviewer mean by the term “religious insanity,” that form of mental alienation which manifests itself upon religious subjects—as when one conceives himself to be God or the Saviour, or takes a false or defective view of his personal relations to God and his revealed laws, as by conceiving himself to have committed “the unpardonable sin,” or to be a hopelessly doomed subject of divine wrath. A gloomy or melancholic temperament, especially under the influence of false or partial teaching, may have induced this conviction. Whatever the cause, when the delusion once takes possession of the mind, it deranges its powers and spreads a pall over almost every object of its contemplation. But who ever heard that such an unhappy sufferer sought relief from his “mental troubles” in the intoxicating cup, or in the haunts of courtezans? “His mental troubles were still further increased by an indulgence in illicit pleasure—this was followed by bitter remorse; and, in consequence, he was induced often to receive the sacrament!” On the contrary, who does not know that the religiously insane, as they are called,

brood with a ceaseless grief over what they suppose to be an inevitable doom, and are sometimes with difficulty restrained from rushing upon it rather than longer endure the anticipation of it. In the case Dr. Ideler presents, and especially in the remarkable passage of the narrative just quoted, we have two aspects of character, either of which would account for all the man's mental troubles, without connecting them even nominally with religion, viz: licentiousness and superstition.

The reviewer remarks, that "it is very usual to attribute 'religious insanity' to religion itself." In the case which has been stated, however, he thinks no such imputation can be made. "Nay, it seems rather probable," he says, "that the strong religious sentiment of the man guided him aright, when he would otherwise have failed; and it was rather the cerebral disease that aggravated this, than this that induced the cerebral disease and its manifestation in religious insanity." We do not know what the original narrative may have shown, but the statement in the review does not furnish a tittle of evidence that the man had any religious sentiment at all that could cope with the libidinous and superstitious sentiment; nor are we informed to what it guided him. If, instead of attempting to convert his brother and sister, this poor carpenter's son had gone to a ship-builder and contracted for a ship and then for a cargo, should we call it commercial insanity? Or, if he had purchased a large farm, and ordered ploughs and oxen and horses and laborers to improve it, would it be spoken of as agricultural insanity? And yet these terms would be equally appropriate, and their aid is as much needed to distinguish peculiar manifestations of derangement like these, as the term "religious insanity" is to denote the character of such a case as has been described. The most that can be said to connect it with religion is, that upon that, as upon all other subjects, he manifested a disordered mind.

But another case is given, in which a sort of religious excitement is charged with having occasioned insanity. The man was a shoemaker, forty-five years old, and happy and contented in his business. He was "so little given to religious duties, however, that he rarely went to church." If a man, capable of religious thoughtfulness, lives forty-five years in this state of probation, without sufficient concern for his soul's well-being to induce the most ordinary religious habits, we must not

be surprised, or regard it as an extraordinary phenomenon, if at any time strange emotions on that subject should be suddenly excited, especially if some unscriptural dogma should first arrest his attention. The shoemaker was converted, not to the faith of Christ, but to the doctrine of the Anabaptists, who persuaded him to submit to baptism as the only way of escaping damnation. An account is given of the ceremony of baptism, but nothing appears to distinguish it from other administrations of that ordinance. He was afterwards involved in a sharp controversy with his co-religionists, and the excitement which this occasioned terminated in a paroxysm of insanity. Now that an utterly irreligious man, whose mind was suddenly impressed, late in life, with a false view of Christian doctrine and duty, should embark in religious controversy, is of itself no slight indication of *previous* intellectual unsoundness; but that the adventure should result in the derangement of such a mind cannot surprise anybody. In the end he fell into a raving *mania*, from which "he was happily recovered by tartar-emetic ointment, applied to the shaved scalp."

In commenting on this case, the reviewer remarks, that "it presents a series of phenomena in remarkable contrast with those of the preceding. The patient appears to have been a good husband and father, but without any religious predisposition or turn of mind. It is only when the stimulus is accidentally applied by the proselyting tracts of the Anabaptists that there is action excited. The enthusiastic character of the tracts would have an abiding influence on a mind untrained in religious discipline, and thus that morbid condition of the brain was excited which a less stimulating and a more judicious communication of religious knowledge would have led only to a religious life and conversation." The case, as stated, discloses nothing as to the nature of the tracts, whether they were tame or enthusiastic, nor does it show that an injudicious communication of religious knowledge had any more to do with the development of his insanity than the sedentary business he followed, or the temperature of the water into which he was plunged at baptism. For aught that appears, he may have been brought to the knowledge of what seven-eighths of the existing evangelical denominations regard as the cardinal doctrine of revealed religion, viz: that the grace of God and a new



spiritual birth are necessary to put away sins. That this spiritual grace is signified or symbolized by the washing of water in baptism, is also an item of almost every Christian creed. Yet we should suppose, from the manner of the narration, that the belief of this doctrine was regarded as one of the phases of insanity! As to the state of stark madness into which the patient was afterwards thrown, there is nothing to indicate the presence of religious excitement even as a remote developing agent. Fourteen other persons were baptized at the same time with the poor shoemaker, converts to the same faith, and for aught that appears, brought to submit themselves to the ordinance by a process quite as stimulating as that which was employed upon him, and one of the fourteen was his own daughter, fifteen years old! Were they all so well balanced or fortified as to resist or elude the influence that wrecked him? Or did they pass through the season of religious excitement with substantially similar views and emotions up to the period when it was the shoemaker's misfortune to fall into a controversy, which had much the same effect upon him that a severe political campaign or a hotly contested lawsuit would have produced on such a mind?

It is certainly a bold assumption, that less enthusiastic tracts or a more discreet communication of religious knowledge would have led to a religious life and conversation. Perhaps a weaker *stimulus* would not have served to excite him at all, and a less vehement appeal than his brother-sectarians made, or what our author calls a "more judicious communication of religious views," might have been entirely unheeded. At all events, we cannot see from the statement made, that the "Anabaptistical enthusiasm" was the obvious exciting cause of the shoemaker's insanity. And then, as to the series of phenomena in this case, which stand, as our author conceives, in such remarkable contrast with those of the carpenter's son, we are at a loss to discover them, unless they are seen in the physical constitution or condition, or in the fact that the mind of one is represented to have been early imbued with a deep religious sentiment, and to have been denied the ordinary training-process of education; while in the other there was no more advantage of intellectual cultivation, but the religious sentiment was entertained at a more advanced period of life. The grand feature common to both

is, that the doctrines and duties of religion were never rightly apprehended, and of course never exerted upon the hearts or habits of either of them their legitimate influence. It would be a shameful act of injustice to condemn a boat as a deodand, because the drowning man for whose rescue it was pushed out did not get fair hold of it, and therefore perished. And is it less ungracious to attribute to religion, or to associate with it even by name, a calamity which it is its peculiar office, as we shall by and by show, to avert?

Passing from specific cases, in which religion is made responsible for such direful consequences, our author feels it incumbent upon him to notice the mental aberrations that have been excited by "so-called popular preachers," and takes occasion to "admonish clergymen, ministers and priests to study more diligently the history of religious insanity, so as to be enabled to distinguish accurately between the ravings of the insane or semi-insane and the operations of the Holy Spirit," and he proceeds to show, very conclusively, that it is a most dangerous error to confound them. He thinks "men consider too seldom that as regards eternal life and a preparation for it, the access of incurable insanity is virtually death, and consequently that the wild preachings of the enthusiast have as deadly an influence on the victim's future state, as if by means of arsenic he had sent him to his account with all his imperfections on his head."

One would almost infer from such a solemn warning, that the wild preaching of the gospel is a chief agent in the production of insanity, and that it must require considerable study and no little skill so to distinguish the fruits of the ministry of the word, as not to mistake the fancies of a disordered brain for the sober convictions of truth and duty. So far from this, we apprehend that the true work of the Spirit of God is indicated by tokens far more distinct and unequivocal than those by which the sanity of men in general is determined. In other words, it is much more likely that a sane man will be found in a lunatic hospital, than that an insane man will be received into the company of believers in consequence of his morbid delusions being mistaken for the fruits of the Spirit of God.

And even if it were not so, the appeal of the reviewer loses much of its force and pathos when it is considered that it would

not aggravate the condition of an unconverted man to pass into the world of spirits in a state of insanity. So far as it abridges the term of human trial, or excludes the hope of pardon and salvation, it is a dreadful calamity to him to become insane. But if the probationary season is unimproved and the offer of pardon rejected and the soul finally lost, the period of his insanity and his infancy will be the only seasons of his life, the review of which will not sting him with remorse.

What our author intends by "the wild preachings of the enthusiast," we have no means of determining. What we understand by the term is very rare in the United States, and we had supposed it to be still rarer in Europe. An enthusiast preaching wildly would at once pass among us for an insane man, and his influence would extend but little, if at all, beyond those who are predisposed to the same class of mental aberrations or already under their power.

It is not impossible that the reviewer has in mind the same sort of preaching which drew upon the great apostle of the Gentiles the imputation of religious insanity from the lips of the Governor of Judea: "Paul, thou art beside thyself, much learning doth make thee mad." He seems not to have suspected that the madness was in his own heart.\* Mistakes of this kind are not unfrequent in lunatic hospitals. A patient imagining herself to be a queen, is surprised at the impudence of those who approach her without tokens of profound respect; and who will undertake the task of persuading her that the false conception is in herself? So it may be that the reviewer has false conceptions of the condition and prospects of men without hope and without God in the world; false conceptions of the gospel itself; false conceptions of its natural and legitimate effect upon the character and conduct of one who receives it in faith; and false conceptions of the mode of presenting it as well as of the divine agency which imparts to it a saving power.

We have known clergymen, to whom the inquiry, "What shall I do to be saved?" has been addressed with an earnestness betokening a sense of guilt and an apprehension of a judgment to come, who have directed the inquirer to try riding on horseback or a free indulgence in worldly amusements. No

\* Ecc. ix. 3.

thoughtful mind can be at a loss to determine which is the insane party in such a dialogue, and yet we are quite in doubt how the reviewer would decide the point.

The third case which the reviewer cites from Dr. Ideler's list is that of a female in humble life, who was grossly ill-treated by her step-mother; suffered divers and severe bodily diseases; was a servant at an ale-house, and then a dress-maker, and was at last supplied with the same sort of mystical and fanatical tracts which worked so much mischief for the poor shoemaker. Her history was so minutely analogous to his that we forbear farther detail. Suffice it to say, that when she was received into the lunatic hospital she was registered as the victim of religious melancholy; but after less than a year's treatment she wrote an autobiography and was discharged cured. That she was deranged there can be no doubt, nor that her derangement was exhibited in her religious habits; but there is not a particle of evidence that attention to religion, or her views of its doctrines or duties had the remotest agency in producing it.

The reviewer evidently anticipates the construction which would be put upon his reasoning by those who regard revealed religion as the soother of all human woes and the antidote to all human ills; and he would fain avert it by drawing a "distinction between those deranged affections of the mind which result from the influences of false religion upon the understanding, and the healthy effect of legitimate Christianity upon the feelings and actions of men. During the course of our experience," he says, "we have never seen a case of insanity which could be clearly traced to true religion. We mean religion as inculcated by the great author of Christianity—the religion that teaches peace and good will towards men—that advocates the noble sentiments of love and charity—which inculcates the feeling of preferring others to ourselves—the religion which represents LOVE, MERCY, and FORGIVENESS as the pre-eminent attributes of the Godhead—the religion whose tendency is to make us take lowly views of ourselves, to humble human pride, to produce a cheerful, serene and happy state of mind—the religion that enables us to bear with fortitude 'the whips and scorns of time, the oppressor's wrong, and the proud man's contumely.'"



This eulogy of the Christian religion and its effects is certainly well deserved, but it has two faults. The Christian religion does something for which the eulogist does not give it credit, and he ascribes to it an important feature which it does not possess. To deny one's self, take up the cross daily and follow Christ; to forsake father and mother, brother and sister, houses and lands, home and country, yea, and one's own life also, for Christ's sake and the gospel's, is a far higher attainment of religious faith than to bear with fortitude "the whips and scorns of time," &c. The former includes the latter and vastly more. And, for the second error, we can say, without verbal captiousness, that we know of no *true* religion that represents love, merey, and forgiveness as any more pre-eminent attributes of the Godhead, than justice, holiness and truth. "Legitimate Christianity" is at best a very suspicious phraseology.

The system of doctrines and duties taught by Christ to his followers, as contained in the New Testament, is Christianity. There is no other Christianity, legitimate or illegitimate, and this reveals God in *ALL* his attributes, in his truth as well as in his love, in his holiness as well as in his merey, in his righteousness as well as in his forgiveness. He who separates these attributes, and presents to us a combination which he thinks safer or more winning, incurs a responsibility which we should be very slow to assume for any end.

That our author's views may be more clearly understood, we cite another passage: "False, fanatic, and mistaken views of our duty to God and man, of our relationship to the divine and benevolent governor of the universe have decidedly a most pernicious effect upon the feelings and intellect, and often produce unequivocal insanity. How many, with, we believe, the purest intentions and from the best motives, represent God, whose great and noblest attribute is love, as a God of vengeance and terror, and who have no conception of the Deity except as one riding upon the whirlwind and the storm, hurling his thunderbolts among those transgressing his laws," &c. We are all prepared to hear that false and fanatical views of religion have an unhappy effect upon the human mind. It could not be otherwise. But what the reviewer would call false and fanatical views, might seem to others just, rational and scriptural,

and such as a teacher of religion would be inexcusably blameworthy for withholding. We more than suspect that his system, if fairly drawn out, would lack some of the essential features of "legitimate Christianity," and though it might not craze people, it would certainly fail to convert and save them. We know of no revelation of the Almighty which authorizes us to represent love as a nobler attribute of his character than holiness, and it is surely "a false, fanatic, and mistaken view" of his revealed nature which excludes such representations as the following: Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord. Rom. xii. 19. With God is terrible majesty. Job xxxvii. 22. While I suffer thy terrors I am distracted. Ps. lxxxviii. 15. The day of vengeance is in my heart. Isa. lxxxiii. 4. Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? Rom. iii. 5. The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. 2 Thess. i. 7, 8.

That there may be, and often are, distorted views of the divine character given and taken, we do not deny; but we are not prepared to admit that persons of weak minds or extreme nervous susceptibilities are particularly exposed to be affected by such errors. On the contrary, we have known a far greater number of instances in which persons of strong mind and well-braced nerves have suffered from the misapprehension of truth in this form. It has been their mistake to indulge in long-continued and intense meditation upon some single item of our faith, as, for example, *the guilt of sin*, until the mind is incapable of any other or happier exercise. It has lost the power to turn towards the cross of Christ and the infinite sacrifice for sin which is there disclosed, and the ordinary communications of grace are not sufficient to overcome this cultivated tendency towards gloom and despair. But a weak mind is incapable of so steady and protracted a survey of the breadth and spirituality of God's law and its unyielding sanctions, and a nervous temperament would shrink from so continuous a task as the case supposes. Such a distorted view of the Christian system has not unfrequently resulted in the dethronement of reason; but religion and its ministers are no more responsible for it, than science is for the derangement of one who loses his wits in

seeking out a new invention, or than the law is for one who goes mad because he loses an important case.

In the course of the discussion, the reviewer suggests an hypothesis which seems to us void of authority if not of plausibility. "On a careful perusal of those histories which modern literature affords of the great periods of religious excitement and enthusiasm, and of those minor fermentations which have led to the establishment of new sects, or have excited local manifestations of religious aberration," (we are not responsible for obscurities of style,) "we find this general principle manifested in all, viz: that the minds of men have been directed to one dogma or principle or point of discipline, in especial, either to the total eclipse of other doctrines or to their partial obscuration and neglect; and for the most part it may farther be stated, as an important fact, that the dogma, or principle, or point of discipline to which this prominence is assigned is generally of secondary importance in the general estimate of Christendom."

It would add much to the force and intelligibleness of this passage if the author had specified some of "the great periods of religious excitement and enthusiasm" which he had in view. Whether, for example, he would reckon the Reformation in the time of Luther, the accession of Cromwell, or of James I., or the rise of Wesleyanism as among them. And if he would, then what dogma, or doctrine, or point of discussion was urged in each or either of these cases to such a mischievous extreme as he supposes, so that we might judge for ourselves what place it occupies "in the general estimate of Christendom." It would be desirable to know, moreover, what he would regard as among "the minor fermentations" that "have led to the establishment of new sects," &c.

We are the more inclined to draw the author out on these points, inasmuch as the only example with which he favors us affords but a very lame support to his theory. He cites the various views which prevail in relation to baptism. "While all Christians maintain, with one exception," (Friends, we suppose,) "that baptism is an essential rite, one sect attributes to it a sacramental efficacy, while another maintains that it is only a point of discipline or a ceremony which may be varied according to circumstances. One sect may think pedobaptism is

the important thing, while another may assert the absolute necessity of adult baptism. Now the common faith of all these sects is that, abstractedly, baptism is necessary to salvation by Christ; and this, therefore, is a fundamental principle of their Christian belief, yet none assert this fundamental principle. What distinguishes each is, that baptism shall be performed in a particular age, and with a belief in certain dogmas of less importance than the fundamental principle itself."

We feel quite prepared to admit that undue importance is often given to non-essentials, but we do not see what this has to do with any theory of religious insanity, unless it is shown that these are the points on which reason is most commonly wrecked; and we cannot believe that the phenomena of insanity are sufficiently understood to enable us to classify its causes so minutely as this. We may say perhaps, in some rare instances, that an undue excitement of the mind in reference to religious subjects generally, was the first indication of its insane state, or possibly, in a solitary case here and there, the deranged thoughts may be concentrated upon some single religious dogma or ceremony. But to affirm that the inculcation of one class or order of religious dogmas has been chiefly or conspicuously productive of what is called religious insanity, we think is quite presumptuous in the present stage of inquiries on the subject. The cases of Thomas Muncer and John of Leyden, though cited in illustration of the author's theory, seem quite insufficient to support it.

In view of the dangers which, as the author supposes, attend the inculcation of religious truth, he exhorts "the teachers of religion and the conductors of public worship to avoid all controversial topics, all exalting services, all enthusiastic methods of teaching or preaching—to make the *precepts* of Christianity the themes of their discourse rather than the *doctrines*, and great moral duties rather than sectarian peculiarities."\*

This passage reveals to us, very plainly, a grand defect in

\* If our memory serves us, counsels, not unlike those here offered, were addressed to the public some years ago, occasioned by an extraordinary revival of religion in the city of Hartford. The absorbing interest which was manifested in the concerns of the soul, by people of all ages and classes, led some philosophic spectator to think that the people were "beside themselves," and to prevent the excitement from spreading, the attempt was made to show that it would turn the good city of Hartford into a Bedlam, if it were continued. The theory was carried so far as to confute itself and secure its early explosion.



the author's religious views, and, of course, a very decided disqualification to judge of the character of religious teaching, or of its appropriate effects on the minds of others. The exhortation is addressed to preachers and religious teachers of all orders and grades, and the rule for their government is not restricted to particular occasions or audiences. If it were to be heeded, what a ricketty, disjointed system would Christianity become! The being of a God is a fundamental "doctrine" of all religions; and what force or sanctions have his "precepts" until his nature and authority are revealed? That man has sinned and incurred the displeasure of God is a "doctrine" of all religions, and what "great moral duties" can be inculcated without recognizing and prominently exhibiting it? Forgiveness of injuries is certainly a "great moral duty," which nothing can enforce more effectively than our Saviour's declaration, If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive you your trespasses. But how are the magnitude and aggravation of these trespasses of ours to be estimated, apart from the infinite attributes of the law-giver and the perfect wisdom and righteousness of the law itself? If I know not what the pounds are which represent my debt to my lord, how shall I admit the insignificance of the pence that my fellow-servant owes me? The summary of the divine law, given by the great Teacher sent from God, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength, and thy neighbor as thyself, may be regarded as the all-comprehensive "precept" of Christianity; but who can understand it or obey it intelligently, to whom the character of God is not disclosed as fully and completely as the doctrines of the scripture disclose it? What love could be felt towards a governor who should suffer the laws of the State to be violated with impunity, or who should indiscriminately pardon all offenders? What safety could we feel under an administration that, in its eagerness to excuse the guilty and to screen the condemned from deserved punishment, should forget to protect the innocent and vindicate the right? Is it not obvious that we must know God as the moral governor of the universe, and of course, that we must know all the "doctrines" that involve his attributes, or the revealed principles and designs of his administration, before we can properly appreciate

the purity and righteousness of his "precepts," the faithfulness of his promises or the terror of his threatenings? To present less than this to a rational being as a system of revealed religion, would be impious and presumptuous beyond degree. If our author's rule of teaching and preaching were observed, men would be called upon to love and obey an unknown God. Without love to prompt obedience, or fear to constrain it, the very incompleteness and poverty of the scheme, and its utter inappropriateness and inadequacy to meet the felt-wants of the human soul, would prove it to be spurious; and it would not be strange if such a balking of the desires and aspirations of the immortal mind should occasion not only insanity but hopeless despair.

The truth probably is, that the views of some men—even intelligent and scientific men—of the nature of the Christian faith and of its influence when truly embraced, are so indefinite, that when they are at a loss to assign any more specific cause of "the mind's disease," they feel at liberty to ascribe it to religion; especially if in the vagaries of the disordered brain, some of its half-understood doctrines are harped upon with considerable frequency. We are not prepared to say what extravagant conceptions of religious truth or ceremonies may consist with a sane mind. If any man, of standing enough to give his opinions a fair start, should announce, for the first time, some of the dogmas of the papal faith—such as that the body of Christ is really and truly, wholly and entirely in the whole sacrifice of the mass, and wholly and entirely in each part at the same time; or that a dying sinner's soul can be benefited by the oil with which the priest besmears his dissolving body, or that after having passed into the eternal world, he can be aided in his escape from the penalty of sin by prayers purchased with money; would not such a man be regarded as beside himself, and his followers as madmen? Are the oddest conceptions of religious insanity more wild and fanciful? Suppose the renowned Laplace had suddenly broken off the most abstruse train of thought on the theory of probabilities and asked his assistant to cut his toenails; or suppose Dugald Stewart had stopped in the middle of a public lecture to direct his dinner to be boiled and not roasted, would not the incident in each case be marked as an unequivocal token of derangement? Yet who counted Socrates insane

when he paused in the midst of his last discourse on immortality, to order the sacrifice of a cock to Esculapius!

If we would rightly understand the phenomena of insanity, we must extend our investigation of its causes or excitements to points quite remote from those presented by Dr. Ideler or his reviewer. The unsubdued temper of a child exhibits itself in paroxysms of passion. Every little disappointment occasions violent irritation. This morbid impatience ripens into sullen discontent with all the allotments of life. The unhappy creature persuades himself that an evil spirit haunts all his footsteps and rules his destiny. This conception is easily made to assume a religious phase or association, and is succeeded by settled gloom, which the hospital register or the newspapers record as a case of religious melancholy, whereas it is really a case of ripe stubbornness.

We might readily illustrate our position by actual cases of disappointed ambition or affection. As where one has aspired to high distinction, and has suffered a defeat so unexpected and mortifying as to unhinge the mind, it is natural that he should assume some exalted character, and insanely suppose himself to be a king, or even the King of kings. Or when the young affections have been so sadly blighted as to veil all the joys and hopes of life, and excite a disgust for life itself, we might expect that reason, overpowered by such a shock, would lead the sufferer into some morbid conception of herself, that would be most congenial to seclusion and a renunciation of the world; and hence she is very likely to assume the character of the Virgin Mary, or to hold herself in readiness for an extraordinary holy service as a companion of some angelic potentate. These are not fictitious cases. They have had their parallel if not their counterpart in many lunatic hospitals, and in neither of them, we apprehend, could there be found a single feature to justify us in classing them among cases of "religious insanity," or in ascribing to religion the remotest connection with their unhappy state.

If in the instances just cited, and others of like character, faith in God had been a controlling principle, the mind would probably have stayed itself on Him, and its integrity would have been preserved. Have our readers never known a lone woman, in humble life, buffeting courageously with the rising

tide of disappointment and sorrow;—a kind and faithful husband removed by death: the means of daily sustenance straitened, perhaps almost to penury; a promising son proving reprobate; a helpful and cheerful daughter deprived of sight, and another prostrate under the power of chronic disease—have they never known such an one in these or like circumstances reposing her trust in her covenant God, and saying with the afflicted but not despairing patriarch, “Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?” Or in the words of one who knew the bitterness of grief,

“ My lifted eye, without a tear,  
The gathering storm shall see,  
My steadfast heart shall know no fear;  
That heart shall trust in thee.”

It is not a superior mind, nor higher moral gifts that makes this obvious difference. It is that in the one case religion is inculcated, and the mind entertains it as an infinitely pure and welcome system of divine truth, embraces its sublime and often mysterious doctrines as a little child receives the lessons of paternal wisdom, and esteems its precepts as just and good, and worthy of prompt and cheerful obedience. God’s providence is regarded as directing and overruling all; and the spontaneous language of the soul is, “ Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him. Though the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines, the labor of the olive shall fail, and the field shall yield no meat, the flocks shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stall, yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.”

In the other case a perverse, fretful, impatient spirit, indulged in childhood, falls, and is “utterly cast down” in the first conflict with the stern realities of life, and becomes the prey of fitful melancholy, if not of settled *mania*.

Esteeming it of transcendent importance, as we certainly do, to give children just ideas of God’s character and government, and such a knowledge of the doctrines of revealed religion as their immature capacities can receive, we must express our unqualified dissent from the views of our author on this point. He thinks that “to prevent what is termed religious insanity, we should be careful, particularly in early life, when the imagination is most alive to impressions, to avoid allowing the mind

to dwell too much on the consideration of the abstractions of religion, and to keep a check upon the feelings. Religious exercise," he says, "though all-important not only in reference to this life, but to a future state of existence, ought to be kept within reasonable and healthy bounds." No sane person would hold that the religious or any other exercises of the mind should exceed those bounds. But to understand the author properly, we must know what he would regard as "abstractions," and what bounds he would consider "reasonable and healthy." It would surely be injudicious to attempt to impose upon a little child's understanding the propositions of Euclid, or a theory of the tides, though it may comprehend some of the elements which are essential to the solution of these propositions and that theory, and without a knowledge of which neither of them could have been conceived or propounded. Upon the same principle we might forbear to indoctrinate a pupil of such tender age in the high mysteries of God's foreknowledge, the introduction of evil into the world, and the inscrutable arrangements of his providential government; but there are truths revealed to the comprehension of "babes and sucklings," which are so interwoven with those higher doctrines as to make the reception of them auxiliary to a strong and elevated faith. There is a nurture in the "milk for babes," from which the transition to "the strong meat for men" is almost imperceptible. Our author seems to have overlooked the simplicity of the truths which are set forth in what he would call the "abstractions of religion." Nor does he seem to be aware of the facility with which the principle involved in them can be made intelligible to little children. We cannot forbear to commend to him an hour's interview with the far-famed Dr. Watts, through the medium of his "Divine Songs for children," in some of which this process of accommodation is beautifully exemplified; and lest so humble a production should not be found without difficulty in a learned man's library, we quote a few illustrations.

The stupendous doctrine of divine omnipotence is thus set forth:

"I sing the almighty power of God  
That made the mountains rise,  
That spread the flowing seas abroad  
And built the lofty skies."



And the omniscience of God thus :

“ Almighty God, thy piercing eye  
Strikes through the shades of night,  
And our most secret actions lie  
All open to thy sight.”

The eternity of the destiny of men is taught in this verse :

“ Just as a tree cut down, that fell  
To north or southward, there it lies,  
So man departs to heaven or hell,  
Fixed in the state wherein he dies.”

And the mystery of human redemption in these :

“ ’Twas to save thee, child, from dying,  
Save my dear from burning flame,  
Bitter groans and endless crying,  
That thy blest Redeemer came.

“ May’st thou live to know and fear him,  
Trust and love him all thy days,  
Then go dwell forever near him,  
See his face and sing his praise.”

These are what we might call, in the phraseology of school-book makers, “ abstractions made easy;” nor have we any fear that a knowledge of them can be inculcated too early or too deeply upon the human mind.

We detect the same misconception of the relations and offices of religion in another caution which our author throws out. “ Where there is already a predisposition to cerebral disease in a religious family, that is to say, a family in which the doctrines and discipline of religion have a marked influence on their actions and habits, it is a fatal mistake to encourage the religious sentiment in early infancy and childhood, and thereby render the youth precociously religious. The irregularity of development of the mental faculties, that will necessarily arise out of this exclusively religious training, will as necessarily lead to irregularity of life and conduct, and the proverb be verified in the individual—‘ A young saint, an old devil.’ ”

“ A predisposition to cerebral disease” in any family, religious or irreligious, should put all its members and friends on their guard against any influences that are likely to develop it. It should be borne in mind, however, that such a tendency is quite as likely to be developed by the too eager pursuit of pleasure, or by the irregularities and extravagances of a worldly and fashionable life, as by a becoming sobriety and a diligent attendance upon religious duties. Indeed, if such a “ predisposi-

tion" exists in a religious family, may we not reasonably hope that the elevating and tranquillizing influences, which never fail to attend the power of true religion, will contribute much to counteract, if not to extinguish it? Surely the calmness and cheerfulness which are diffused through all the apartments and occupations of a Christian household, are eminently fitted to produce such an effect.

If the "doctrines and discipline of religion have a marked influence on the actions and habits of a family, the religious sentiment" cannot but be encouraged in all its members. It is scarcely possible to surround a child with more potent agencies and instruments to secure the education of the religious part of his nature, than to place him in a family "whose actions and habits are plainly ordered and governed by the doctrines and discipline of religion." To live in the midst of such influences during the impressible period of "early infancy and childhood," and yet not have "the religious sentiment encouraged," would be quite as impossible as for a colony of New Zealanders to live in Broadway or Chestnut street, without changing their habits and manners. We must therefore remove the child who suffers from such "cerebral tendencies," entirely away from such associations, or we must run the risk of encouraging most effectively the religious sentiment.

What our author understands by "precociously religious youth," we do not know. Samuel, Josiah and Timothy were very religious when they were very young. They have generally been regarded as examples which it would be safe for children, in all generations, to copy. And many parents have been stimulated, by viewing the grace of God manifested to those youth, to hope for a like early exhibition of godliness in their children. The wisest man that ever lived seems not to have apprehended the danger which our author points out, for he clearly enjoins an early encouragement of the religious sentiment in that familiar proverb of his: "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." The "way" in which all religious parents would doubtless wish their children to go "when they are old," is the way of the godly. And to this end the wise man (very philosophically it must be allowed) counsels them to turn their childish footsteps into that way; in other words, "to encourage the reli-

gious sentiment" in early infancy and childhood, without any exception in favor of cerebral infirmities, or predispositions to insanity.

The captive little maid, who waited on the Syrian general's wife, seems to have evinced the very strong controlling influence that religious faith may exert over a child without danger to its intellectual faculties ; and it also shows (what many analogous cases might be cited to show) that such an early development of religious principle is not without peculiar advantages. Probably the parents of the little girl had trained her to revere the servants of the Lord, and confide implicitly in the miraculous tokens of their divine authority ; and hence her opportune commendation of her noble but afflicted master to the supernatural skill of "the prophet that was in Samaria."

The children in the temple too, seem to have been quite as much excited by the presence of the son of David as the rulers were with indignation at their hosannas ; but instead of fearing to "encourage unduly the religious sentiment," the divine teacher speaks of it as the fulfilment of an ancient prophecy, that "out of the mouth of babes and sucklings God's praise shall be perfected." How strikingly at variance with all this is the doctrine of the reviewer that it is a fatal mistake to encourage the religious sentiment in early infancy and childhood !

We are at a loss to understand whence our author, (in the case supposed,) takes the idea of an "exclusively religious training." A child may live in a "family in which the doctrines and discipline of religion have a marked influence on their actions and habits," and may feel the happy and healthful effects of such an example, and yet go to school six hours every day, and engage, to his heart's content, in all the innocent diversions and invigorating sports of childhood. He has no ill-humoured or intemperate father to frown upon him ; no thriftless or negligent mother to regard his return home as a new burden of care ; no selfish and quarrelsome brothers and sisters to abuse and provoke him ; but he enjoys the blessing of a pleasant dwelling-place, made happy and attractive by the gentle influences of religion. In such associations he is saved from countless crosses and irritations which are almost inseparable from an ungodly or worldly family, and this of itself must be of inestimable advantage in



resisting any predisposition to "cerebral disease." Moreover, the idea of an "exclusively religious training" is preposterous. It cannot be. There are countless agencies, within and without every child, that are incessantly active in educating its powers of body and mind. These agencies cannot be eluded. With all the forethought and anxiety that godly parents can exercise, the religious influence will be but one of a score of influences in constant pressure upon him; and while the former acts, single-handed, against his natural desires and propensities, the latter, with combined energy, coincide with them, and thus have an inestimable advantage; and they would retain it too and lead the soul captive at their will, if it were not for the gracious interposition of divine power.

But admitting our author's position to be tenable, and that an "exclusively religious training" were practicable, we could not admit his conclusion, that "an irregular development of the mental faculties" would necessarily arise out of it, nor that such a training would "necessarily lead to irregularity of life and conduct, making an old devil out of a young saint." Such false deductions arise from ignorance of the moral condition of men. If we take our opinions from Him who knows perfectly what is in man, we shall be in no danger of such mistakes. He tells us that the things which assimilate men to devils are in the **HEART**. *There* is the nest of evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, and blasphemies. These lead to "irregularity of life and conduct," and no development of the mental faculties will expel or even disturb them, but only give them a more vigorous activity. God, our creator, has clearly taught us that these native tenants of the human bosom are not to be ousted by any ordinary process. The strong man posted there is armed, and will keep his palace till a stronger than he shall come, and then the expulsion is effected, "not by might, not by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord." The earlier this divine work is accomplished, the better for the subject of it, the better for the world and the more for the glory of God's grace. And hence the earlier a child knows the plague of his own heart, and the earlier he is led to resort to the great Physician for a cure, the happier it must be for him and for all concerned. Judicious religious training, coeval with the earliest indications of moral susceptibility, tends directly to produce

these desirable results ; and to defer it through fear of “ developing a predisposition to cerebral disease ” is inconsistent with all sound Christian philosophy, and must involve the parties in great guilt.

In our inquiries on such a subject as this we are apt to be so intent upon the study of immediate and present results as to overlook general principles, by which they are explained or governed. It is worth while to consider what effect we might expect to follow the offering of the Christian system to the faith of the human soul. It has been said that “ the undevout astronomer is mad ; ” in other words, that the very partial and imperfect knowledge we can attain of the composition and magnitude, courses and revolutions, distances and relations of the heavenly bodies, must prompt a sane mind to devotion. These wonders of divine wisdom and power, though material and perishable, are supposed to serve for a medium through which the thoughts pass upward to spiritual things that endure. The sight of them must lead us to exclaim, “ Lord ! what is man that thou art mindful of him ? ”

There are, however, fixed principles which science employs in investigations of this nature, which seem to put the whole subject within our grasp, and we persuade ourselves that there is nothing hidden which we cannot bring to light. But the things which the Spirit of God reveals to us (eye hath not seen nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived them) are infinite. The Spirit reveals all that we know of them, and our capacities are completely filled the moment they are turned to the contemplation of the glory of God, as it shines in the face of Jesus Christ.

We know that before sin entered into the world, the soul was capable of, and actually enjoyed, an intimate communion with God, like that which is permitted to angels. The contemplation of their Maker’s glory was in the highest degree beatifying to the first created pair. So that all the beauties and glories of paradise became insipid and insignificant, by reason of the excellent glory and beauty of the divine presence. They had powers essentially such as we possess, and had they retained the image of God in which they were created, this open and perfect communion would have been our glorious privilege, and we should have had capacities to receive revelations of God’s character and designs of which, in our fallen state, we are wholly inca-

pable. The sad effects of that one original transgression are seen not only in the pollution and degradation of the soul, but in the confusion and weakness of the intellectual powers.

When they have past through the present state of trial, believers in Christ will be re-united to the society of holy beings. Their faith makes them members of Christ's body. Thus they become one with him as he is one with the Father, and their powers and capacities are restored to their primitive state. No new capacities are bestowed. It is only that sin and its consequences are all separated from the soul, and it thus becomes, *ipso facto*, capable, as at first, of holy and perfect communion with God.

It would seem then that whatever incapacities or weaknesses are inherent in our present nature, they are the product of sin, and whatever "revealed religion" does towards counteracting the power and remedying the effects of sin, it does in an equal degree towards enlarging and improving our capacities of divine knowledge. Now, if the contemplation of but a minute portion of the visible wonders of creation may be expected to lead any sane mind to devotion, what must be the effect of revealing to it the moral attributes of the great Creator himself? If the mechanism of the sky and the perfection and harmony of the intricate laws which preserve and govern its countless orbs, are so impressive as to justify us in esteeming "an undevout astronomer" as "mad," what must be thought of one who can receive, without the deepest emotion, the revelation of the great mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh! The stupendous scheme of man's redemption exceeds in wonder and wisdom all the visible things of creation, as much as that which is eternal and infinite exceeds that which is finite and perishing. And yet it may be comprehended in all its elevating, sanctifying and saving power by a little child! It is not needful that intricate problems should be solved, and that a life-time should be spent in elaborate investigations into the law of forces, and the combinations of light and air and motion. These exercises of the mental powers, stimulated only by the love of science or the desire of fame, must oftentimes exhaust, if not confound them. But when the soul, even of a little child, by faith receives Christ as its Lord and Saviour, a light is struck that no power will ever extinguish. It will shine brighter and brighter

to the perfect day. The radiance of heaven is instantly shed upon the little pilgrim's path. New objects seize his attention and rivet his affections. What was before mysterious and perplexing now becomes plain and satisfying: he was blind, but now he sees: he was dead, but is alive again.

Reasoning *a priori* we should conclude that to solve the astronomer's problem would be comparatively an easy task for powers that would strive in vain to apprehend the truths of "revealed religion;" yet the testimony of experience and observation constrains us to a very different conclusion. It proves on the one hand that he who is incapable of mastering the multiplication table, may comprehend mysteries which angels desire to look into; and, on the other, that one who can unlock all the secrets of human philosophy may be confounded and baffled by the simplest of revealed truths. The scriptures explain to us this paradox when they declare that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." This spiritual discernment is a gift, not an acquirement. It is bestowed on the humble and child-like, not on the proud and self-conceited. He who has it is lifted by it above the war of elements. He observes, unmoved, the direction and fury of storms that dash in pieces, like a potter's vessel, cavillers, skeptics and bold blasphemers; and he follows with his eye the dispersing clouds as they give place to the bright outshining of the sun.

He can even reconcile the seeming inconsistencies of God's providential dealings, at which so many stumble and fall. He traces an outline of order in the wildest confusion, and discerns a cheering gleam of light where the worldly and sensual are enveloped in a darkness that may be felt. It is not strong intellectual powers that enable him to do this, nor are these the fruits of any carnal philosophy. So far from it, the carnal mind, which is enmity against God, has been subdued. The renewed soul receives with implicit faith and obedience all God's revelations of himself and of his will. It contemplates with equal satisfaction and serenity his holiness, justice and truth, and his love, compassion and forgiveness. The question of the religious educator should therefore be, not what predispositions may exist to "cerebral disease" and nervous excitabil-

ity, but what is the temper of the mind? Is there the spirit of docility which inquires, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to believe and do?" Is there a willingness to become a fool in order to be truly wise? If so, the simple saving truths of "revealed religion," including both doctrines and precepts, will show no tendency to dethrone reason nor to derange its powers. So far from it, they and they alone are fitted to enlighten, guide, sanctify and sustain it. The mind's capacity to receive new truth, or to perceive it in new and higher relations, will improve and expand, by exercise, from the first throb of spiritual life in the new-born soul, until it reaches unto the measure of the stature of a perfect man in Christ Jesus.

There is still another view in which the doctrine or opinion of our author is unsound. The history of the results of religious training shows that in a very great majority of cases parental fidelity in the Christian nurture of children has been amply rewarded, even in this world, by their godly walk and conversation. The most stable, useful, active and trustworthy citizens in public and private life have come out of those families "in which the doctrines and discipline of religion have a marked influence on their actions and habits." Early subjection to the restraints of parental authority and domestic law has prepared them to govern themselves in all the relations they afterwards sustain. The dutiful and affectionate son, whom our author might regard as a "young saint," has been called, in ripe manhood, to occupy the most elevated social positions, while the "old devils" have almost uniformly sprung from a neglected childhood. In these latter cases the attempt to encourage the religious sentiment has not been made, and the "cerebral disease" is developed in some enormous crime.

The "fatal mistake" we have to fear, according to our author's creed, is making the "youth precociously religious." The fatal mistake which has actually been made, since the world began (as history and experience show), is to neglect the religious training of infancy and childhood, and thus encourage a precocious development of natural depravity.

Those who are so forward to ascribe mental derangement to influences connected with religion cannot be aware we think of the proper relation of cause and effect. If a drowning man is so far exhausted as to be incapable of seizing the oar or the



rope that is thrown out to him, we cannot properly say that the rope or the oar caused his death. So when "the doctrines and precepts of revealed religion" are brought to bear upon a depraved and guilty creature like man, his carnal nature rises up in instant rebellion against them. We do not object to calling this *moral insanity*. He cavils at what would humble the pride of reason. He cannot tolerate the restraints that obedience would lay upon his sensual appetites and worldly desires; and in the tumult of conflicting passions, it is not strange that the mind should run into eccentricities and incoherencies. But religion has nothing to do with it. All that can be said of her is that she would have saved the man if he had availed himself of her proffered help, but she can in no sense be regarded as the author or cause of his calamity.

Our reviewer would evidently be an astanch advocate for the modern theory on this subject. He would probably argue that as the too early inculcation of the religious sentiment tends to produce religious insanity, the too early inculcation of moral sentiments tends in like manner to the production of moral insanity. Hence he must, in all due consistency, advise that where there is a predisposition to "cerebral disease," the distinction between right and wrong, truth and falsehood, integrity and dishonesty, should not be too strenuously urged; and that where these qualities seem to be confounded, so that a man mistakes another's watch or pocket-book for his own, or breaks open his neighbour's house under a misapprehension of the rights of property, or shoots an heiress because she will not marry him, he should be put upon strict diet, all excitement of his nervous system should be avoided, and care taken to divert his mind from the study of ethical subjects.

We are not trifling. We regard the notion of "moral insanity," lately promulgated in some quarters, as a device for the protection of wicked and ungovernable men from the just punishment of their crimes, where there can be no pretence of any common type of insanity to answer the same purpose. There is such a thing as moral insanity. So intimate and mysterious is the connection between the immortal spirit of a man and its earthly tabernacle, that disease may impair or pervert for a season his moral feelings and affections, while the reasoning faculty is not materially weakened. But it is not difficult to

distinguish such cases from those which in the most refined modern philosophy passes under the name of "moral insanity." The divine oracles speak of a "madness in the hearts of men" while they live. Our moral nature is, in the strictest sense, deranged, and if our being in this state exempts us from responsibility for violations of the law of God or man, we must look for an entirely new system of divine and human government. The Bible becomes obsolete at once, with all the motives and sanctions which it reveals, and the law by which every man governs himself is "to do what is right in his own eyes."

As the result of the present discussion we suggest the following propositions:

I. It is as unjust to ascribe cases of what is commonly called "religious insanity" to religion, as their cause, as it would be to charge our insane hospitals with originating or confirming the cases which they do not cure.

II. There is no such thing as religious insanity: i. e. it cannot be said of religion, as it can be of grief, or disappointment, or chagrin, that it causes insanity.

III. To inculcate the doctrines, as well as the precepts, of revealed religion upon the human mind, at the earliest period of its capacity to receive them, is the clear scriptural duty of all persons who have the care of children and youth.

IV. To neglect or delay such an encouragement of the religious sentiment, from any apprehension of developing a tendency to "cerebral disease," is as unphilosophical and fatal, as it would be to withhold all food from a child through fear of strangling it, or destroying its digestive organs.

V. The due apprehension and influence of religious truth, as revealed in the scriptures, constitutes the best preservative against mental aberrations—especially such as are supposed to originate in moral causes.

VI. The earlier the mind is brought under the supreme influence of religious truth, the more likely it is to retain its integrity, when the exciting occasions of derangement occur.





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